

CLAIMS:

1. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable modules comprising:

a file locator configured to locate an executable image on a computer media;

a file-format recognizer configured to recognize the file format of the executable image from amongst a database of multiple file format definitions;

a memory-mapper configured to open the executable image from the computer media and read it into a computer memory;

an importer configured to find a list of executable image names to load;

an exporter configured to build a representation of program modules that an executable image exports;

a binder configured to link multiple executable images together, such images being those of the list of executable image names.

2. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the database is extensible so that additional file format definitions may be added to the database of multiple file format definitions.

3. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the importer is further configured to direct the loading of multiple executable images of the list of executable image names to load

4. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the file-format recognizer is further configured to select one or more of a group of available pluggable sub-loaders is capable of loading the recognized file format of the executable image.

5. A loader comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1.

6. An operating system comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1.

7. A computer comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 1.

8. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable modules comprising:

a searcher configured to search a computer media for an executable image for loading;

a format recognizer configured to the format of the executable image;

a memory-mapper configured to load and map the executable image into memory based upon the format of the executable image;

a sub-loader configured to examine a data structure of the executable image to determine whether to load additional images;

a database of multiple executable-image formats which is the basis for which the recognizer recognizes the format of executable image and for which the memory-mapper varies how it loads and maps the executable image into memory.

9. A medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the database is extensible so that additional executable-image formats may be recognized by the recognizer and loaded and mapped by the memory-mapper.

10. A medium as recited in claim 8, wherein one or more modules the medium are configured to be replaced with a replacement module without recompilation of one or more modules.

11. A medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to convert the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

12. A medium as recited in claim 8, wherein the memory-mapper is further configured to decrypt the executable image before mapping it into the memory.

13. A loader comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 8.

14. An operating system comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 8.

15. A computer comprising a computer-readable medium as recited in claim 8.

16. A method for facilitating loading to one or more executable images a varying formats, the method comprising:

locating an executable image on a computer media;

investigating information related to the executable image, thereby identifying the format of the executable image;

based upon the identified format of the image, initiating a loader associated with that identified format;

with that loader, loading the executable image into a computer memory.

17. A method as recited in claim 16, wherein during the investigating an extensible database of executable-image formats is accessed.

18. A method as recited in claim 16, wherein headers of the image contains the information related to the executable image for the investigating.

19. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions that, when executed by a computer, performs the method as recited in claim 16.

20. A computer comprising one or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions that, when executed by the computer, perform the method as recited in claim 16.

21. A computer-readable medium having modularized computer-executable modularized sets of instructions that, when executed by the computer, load one or more executable images into a computer memory, such an image having one or more formats defined by an extensible database of executable-image formats.

22. A medium as recited in claim 21, wherein the modularized sets of instructions are isolated with clean interfaces.

23. An operating system comprising a medium as recited in claim 21.